NATURAL NEWS

The Field Museum
Exploring
The Earth And Its
People

December 29, 1995

OPEN ENROLLMENT IS COMING!

Yes, it soon will be time again to consider what medical and dental coverage you want for the 1996 plan year of February 1, 1996 to January 31, 1997. Open Enrollment packets will be distributed to eligible staff next week. Check your mail!

NEW BENEFITS ORIENTATION!

There will be two orientation sessions to introduce the two new benefits for 1996. The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and Long-Term Care (LTC). A brief introduction to each benefit will be presented followed by time for questions.

Date: Thursday, January 11, 1996
Time: 9:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.
Or 2:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Place: Montgomery Ward Hall

Please plan to attend one of the orientation sessions.

Congratulations to **Janeen Devine** (Library) and her husband Marty on the birth of their baby Margret K. Devine. Little Margret weighed in at 7 lbs. 12 oz. and measured 22" long. Both mother and baby are doing fine.

MAILROOM ALERT

From January 4 to January 12, 1996, the Mail Room will be closed for lunch between 12:30 and 1:30 p.m.

Supplies may be obtained during the regular hours of 8:30 - 11:00 a.m.

Faxes may be dropped off at any time at the drop box by the xerox machine.

Thank you. -- **Frantz Eliacin**

Thanks!

Many, many thanks to **Diane Alexander White** for the terrific photos of the Employee Recognition luncheon in the *Natural News* of December 15. **Ed Czerwin** did a great job of printing them.

And thanks as well to **Andy Medina** and Ed Czerwin of the Print Shop for doing such a good job on the *Natural News* year round!

CLEAR YOUR VOICE MAIL!

The system is at 80% capacity and may quit accepting messages.

NEW JOB OPENINGS

Below are the latest job opportunities in the Museum. For further information, please check the Career Opportunities listing published by the Personnel Department.

Security Officer I
Security Supervisor
Biochemistry Laboratories Manager
Harris Loan Center Coordinator
Sponsored Programs Coordinator
Housekeeper I
Community Outreach Program Assistant
Women's Board Coordinator
Administrative Assistant

NOON BALLOON

The Noon Balloon for Tuesday, December 19, 1995 was presented by **Michael Nedbal,** Department of Geology. Michael addressed questions concerning the higher level systematics and zoogeography of rodents using evidence from the mitochondrial 12S rRNA gene.

Rodents comprise about 1/2 of all mammalian species. There are nearly 1700 rodent species allocated to 350+ genera in 32 families comprising 3 suborders: sciuromorphs (squirrels), myomorphs(mice), and hystricomorphs (porcupine rodents), or only two suborders if myomorphs are lumped with the hystricomorphs. Disagreements in subordinal classifications arise from differences in interpretations of the structure and function of the masticatory apparatus. Although rodent families are well defined, relationships among families are controversial. Within the hystricognaths, phiomorph rodents, ten genera (including twenty-six species) occur in Africa, while caviomorph rodents, forty-five genera (including 182 species), occur in South America.

Michael tested the monophyly of each subordinal classification as well as monophyly of the Old World and New World groupings. He obtained 12S sequences from fifty-nine rodent species representing twenty-five of the thirty-two families. Alignments were refined using the secondary structureof 12S of Rattus. Since most changes in a DNA sequence are presumed to be neutral, data sets must be analyzed for any internal bias.

He found no base composition bias in loops with respect to other mitochondrial genes, but did find a significant increase in G-C content for stem transversions implying some form of rate heterogeniety is present within the total data set. Sequence analyses using various methods such as neighbor-joining, maximum likelihood, and weighted versus unweighted characters as well as inclusion or exclusion of insertion or deletion characters produced a wide array of tree configurations.

Michael concluded that rate heterogeneity was confounding resolution of tree structure. He hypothesized a gene specific increase must have occurred early in rodent diversification, which was followed by a rate decrease. Michael demonstrated that the evolution of DNA sequences in at least some groups of rodents are not "neutral", but are clearly under some form of selective pressure.

IN MEMORY OF ROGER BUELOW

Those of us who knew **Roger Buelow,** who passed away on December 21, will remember his gentleness of spirit, his engaging smile and the self-deprecating humor that was downright savage on the subject of himself. We will remember his creation -- whether as manager of the Mail Room (1979-1987) or as manager of publication sales in the Library (1987-April 1994) -- of labyrinthine work spaces into which he would retreat. The approach to his desk in the library was marked by the official-looking sign "Cloisters," and his "customary suits of solemn black" were perfectly befitting the occupant of that space. How characteristic of Roger that he wished his passing to be unmarked by ceremony or monument; and how surprised he would be to know that many of us will not forget him.

- Ben Williams

EMPLOYEE ANNIVERSARIES

November, 1995

Stephen Borysewicz - Exhibits - 5 years
William Burger - Botany - 30 years
Mara Cosillo-Starr - Education - 10 years
Lynnetta Flowers - Education - 5 years
Geoffrey Grove - Exhibits - 10 years
Kent Peasley - Exhibits - 5 years
Jessie Thymes - Education - 10 years

December, 1995

Luis Fernandez - Maintenance - 10 years
John Kethley - Zoology - 25 years
James Koeppl - Computing - 10 years
Kristen Webber - Education - 5 years
Diane White - Public Services - 5 years

FYI -- The Field Museum home page on the Internet is:

http://www.bvix.uic.edu/museum/

The *Natural News* is edited by **Carolyn Klyce** in the President's Office. The deadline for all submissions is Tuesday at noon. Printed on recycled paper.